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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAMAKO 000266

SIPDIS

RABAT FOR LEGAL ATTACHE
DEPT FOR INL - AARON ALTON
DOJ FOR DEA

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SUBJECT: MALI ANSWERS INTERPOL'S CALL BY ARRESTING DRUG TRAFFICKER

REF: BAMAKO 00097

Classified By: Political Officer Fred Noyes, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(SU) Summary: On March 26, Malian police arrested Adrea Tsakiris, a drug trafficker of dual French and Greek nationality wanted by authorities in several countries. Tsakiris, who was in Mali hiding from an Interpol warrant, is currently in custody waiting for extradition to France. The arrest comes as Mali is battling a reputation as an increasingly important transit point for West Africa's burgeoning drug trade and the first appearance of crack cocaine on Bamako streets. An INL program designed to provide curriculum support and other opportunities to the Bamako Police Academy, and the assignment of a senior law enforcement officer to Embassy Bamako (Reftel), if and when these are approved and implemented, will constitute the first steps toward providing Malian police and judicial counterparts with the skills and the tools needed to stem increased drug traffic through Mali. End Summary.

The Fugitive

2.(SBU) Malian press described Andrea Tsakiris as "one of the most sought-after drug traffickers on the planet." While we have no way of assessing this claim, a French court in Rennes issued an international arrest warrant for the dual Greek-French national following the seizure of 3.2 tons of cocaine in Guinea-Conakry. Interpol subsequently provided Malian authorities with information that Tsakiris might be in Mali, and Mali's Judicial Investigative Brigade arrested Tsakiris less than 48 hours later. Tsakiris is currently in Malian custody awaiting extradition to France.

3.(C) Malian police used relatively straight forward investigative techniques to locate and apprehend Tsakiris. The Director of the Judiciary Police, Hamidou Kansaye, told the Embassy on April 7 that Tsakiris had been "prudent" in his behavior and was clearly in Mali to hide from authorities. Kansaye said Tsakiris avoided registering as a guest in any area hotel and shunned the common practice of relying on one preferred taxi driver, which would have made his patterns more detectable for local police. On the other hand, Tsakiris continued to use his cell phone. After obtaining Tsakiris' phone number, the Judicial Investigative Brigade (BIJ) asked the local cell phone company to identify the towers activated by his cell phone use. This information enabled the BIJ to determine where Tsakiris was staying and he was apprehended shortly thereafter.

4.(SBU) Tsakiris was in possession of a French passport, the

validity of which was confirmed by French authorities at the time of his arrest. Tsakiris also had on his person a Guinean passport in a different name. Director Kansaye said drug traffickers in West Africa are able to secure Guinean identity documents with relative ease.

Drugs, Traffickers and Chemists

5.(SBU) Tsakiris's arrest took place in the context of a larger drug problem confronting Malian authorities. According to Director Kansaye, drug seizures and drug related arrests in Mali have increased considerably. Kansaye noted that drugs seized on Malian soil are generally not for local consumption, with the exception of some marijuana use. Kansaye claimed to believe that more than half of the estimated 11,000 taxi bus drivers in Bamako used marijuana. According to Kansaye, the intended destination of most marijuana seized in Mali is Senegal or Mauritania, whereas the cocaine transiting the country is generally heading toward Europe, primarily Spain.

6.(SBU) There is little drug-related violence in Mali, perhaps because Bamako is merely one of many transit points across West Africa. Director Kansaye stated that - with the exception of Tsakiris - most drug traffickers passing through Mali are only mules paid small amounts to smuggle the drugs and serve as middlemen. The drug lords controlling the trade are elsewhere.

7.(SBU) Kansaye said the potential for drug-related violence

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in Mali was increasing, however, due to the recent arrival of crack cocaine. Kansaye indicated that although the police have only encountered crack cocaine on a couple of occasions in Bamako, they are starting to encounter the precursor ingredients for manufacturing crack cocaine, such as ammonium. Kansaye believes crack cocaine could take root in Mali in a way other drugs have not. First, at 1000 FCFA (approx. 2 USD) a rock, crack is the first drug to appear in Mali that would be accessible to the average Malian. "Everyone can buy it," Kansaye said. Second, crack has the potential to be developed locally. One side effect of Mali's extraordinarily high unemployment rate for college graduates, according to Kansaye, is that there are many "chemists out there with diplomas but no jobs."

Police Capabilities

8.(SBU) Despite their rapid success in finding Tsakiris, the Malian police are quick to admit that they have limited capabilities. The Narcotics Brigade of the National Police, for example, employs only 24 officers for the totality of Mali, and training is sorely lacking. Director Kansaye relayed one story of a drug seizure in northern Mali that was reported by Kidal based Drug Brigade officers to superiors in Bamako - and to local media - as a seizure of 750 kilograms of cocaine. When the drugs were brought back to Bamako, however, police discovered that the "cocaine" was actually marijuana and that Drug Brigade officers in northern Mali had misidentified the captured contraband. Kansaye also said that Drug Brigade officers sometimes let drugs pass simply because they do not recognize what they are.

9.(C) According to Kansaye, the police also need better technology, equipment, and support. Although the police were able to enlist the assistance of the phone company to localize Tsakiris's cell phone, Kansaye underscored several times that the Malian police do not have the technology to tap telephones or to monitor cellular calls. Moreover, even when the Malian police have technology, they often lack the resources needed to use it. Kansaye provided just one rather

low tech example - the recent donation by external partners of vehicles for use by the police. The vehicles are not used, said Kansaye, because the police do not have the gasoline to fill them.

Police Accomplishments

10.(SBU) Notwithstanding limited resources, the Malian police have seized a significant amount of narcotics, particularly at Bamako-Senou International Airport. Police data provided to the Embassy indicate there were 39 arrests at Bamako-Senou in 2008, involving 38 men and 1 woman. Police seized a total of 29.11 kilograms (approx. 64 lbs.) of cocaine, as well has 84.9 kilograms (approx. 187 lbs.) of marijuana. The smugglers arrested included 23 Malians, 7 Nigerians, and 9 persons of other nationalities.

11.(SBU) Of particular note is the method of smuggling utilized by those arrested. In 25 recorded cases, "ingestion" was the method of concealing the drugs. In 2 cases, smugglers attempted to hide the drugs in their suitcases, in one case using a suitcase with a false bottom. In 2 cases, smugglers hid the drugs in their clothes, and in another 2 cases, smugglers hollowed out statuettes and placed the drugs inside. In 8 cases, the smugglers "wrapped" the drugs in one material or another - for example, one arrested person attempted to disperse marijuana in sacs of incense.

12.(SBU) The Malian police also appear to make the most of cooperative relationships with foreign counterparts. On April 7, the Embassy was originally scheduled to meet not with Director Kansaye of the Judiciary Police, but with his subordinate, Director Seydou Toure of the Narcotics Brigade. Toure was unable to meet with the Embassy because he had received a call the morning of April 7 from police officials in Venezuela advising that a shipment of drugs originating in Venezuela was on route to Mali via DHL. Director Kansaye advised the Embassy that the Judiciary Police maintain good relations with DHL, as it is frequently used by drug smugglers.

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Comment: Resource Shortages

13.(SBU) Mali's National Judiciary Police appear committed to stemming the flow of drugs across Malian borders. They are also eager to cooperate with international law enforcement counterparts. Although the challenges Malian narcotics officers face in terms of resources and training are daunting, Director Kansaye's candid willingness to discuss what could be perceived as embarrassing shortfalls is both refreshing and encouraging. Malian ability to interdict increased drug trafficking through Bamako is a function of these resource and training deficiencies. Given current resource allotments, Malian officials are likely interdicting only a small fraction of the drugs actually moving through Bamako and the rest of Mali. We are looking forward to working with INL to design a program that would enable us to provide curriculum support to the Malian police academy and also allow for the assignment of a senior law enforcement officer to Embassy Bamako. The assignment of an INL officer to Bamako will help ensure the effectiveness of future collaboration with Malian law enforcement, increase coordination with other donor nations in this sector, and improve Malian authorities' ability to coordinate with regional counterparts to effectively combat West Africa's rising drug trade.

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